after ego in reverse. The novel is thus a study of the distortion of the self by egotism of one kind or another. In a world afflicted by egotism, the idea of saving the people of 'the other house' is highly ironic and amusing, and is a mark of spiritual ineptitude. When the judge and the judged are alike in their egotism, the business of moral judgment becomes a wholly irrelevant and hollow preoccupation. James thus underscores the need for a refined self which alone, by virtue of its self-knowledge and self-awareness, can give relevance and meaning to the idea of moral justice. The sovereignty of selfhood must recognize the legitimacy of human independence which is justice in the moral sphere, and refinement in the spiritual. What justice is to the aggregate, refinement is to the individual - a force for redemptive self-knowledge.

Selflessness and altruism are necessary ingredients in human refinement, but they may easily exceed their limits in a rage of good conscience and thus result in an egotism of the worst kind, namely spiritual presumption and moral egotism. The Jamesian outstretched protagonists take pride in their moral superiority, and in the folly of seeming virtue set about to reform the world. In *The Spof/s of Poynton* and *The Turn of the Screw* Henry James traces the destructive consequences of an over-refinement of the self leading to moral delusion and the ossification of self-knowledge. Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton* and the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* are morally deluded creatures, lacking in essential self-knowledge, and are thus foredoomed to failure in their overweening roles as saviours. .True human refinement consists in a controlled awareness of the moral middle-grounds which prevent man from being predatorily egocentric, or presumptuously altruistic.

In *The Spoils of Poynton,* James continues to dramatise the evils of a distorted self, and demonstrates the impossibility of moral justice operating as an effective principle of correct conduct

in a world of greed and egotism. Mrs, Gereth and Mona endeavour to isolate beauty and make it exclusive by possessing it. In a world of warring egotisms, objects of beauty are regarded as 'spoils' by the selfishness of men. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and is more so, when it is a rarity; but human egotism and greed unite to separate art from its purpose, and beauty from its uniqueness. A battle is, as it were, waged for the possession of the Spoils of Poynton with Mrs. Gereth on one's-ide, and her sort a.nd his ftanc.ee on tfye other. The aesthetic